Methods for Teaching Hispanic English Language Learners

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Abstract

With the increase of diversity in American schools and the growing importance of English around the world, teaching English as a second language has become an essential aspect to education. It is difficult to have students of different cultural backgrounds in the classroom who are not proficient in English. A teacher cannot expect these students to succeed in an English only classroom setting. It is important that there be specialized teachers to address the needs of these students in order to reach all students where they are and help them accomplish all that they need to in order to succeed. Countless methods have been proposed for teaching students English. My thesis will examine the different methods and primarily focus on how they are used with Hispanic students and which ones seems to produce better results.

Methods for Teaching Hispanic English Language Learners

With the increase of diversity in American schools and the growing importance of English around the world, teaching English as a second language has become incredibly important. An estimated amount of 4,999,481 English Language Learner (ELL) students in public schools equals 10.3% of students enrolled in public schools. This is about a 40% increase from the statistics given in 1993-1994 on the ELL population in schools throughout the United States (McKeon, June 2005). Schools across the United States are not filled with children who all come from homes where English is spoken; much to the contrary, schools are now filled with students from countless cultural backgrounds, many of them without a working understanding of the English language. There were nearly double the number of Hispanic students in American public schools in 2006 as there were in 1990. In 2008 nearly 10 million Hispanic students were enrolled in public schools meaning that 1 in every 5 students were Hispanic compared to 1 in every 8 in 1990 (Fry & Gonzales, 2008).

According to National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition many children are participating in English as a Second Language (ESL) programs in the United States, and the number of English language learners is continually growing. States like Texas, California, New York, and Florida are especially seeing immense growth in numbers (Cho & Larke, 2010). But growth is not limited to these states, and rising numbers have been seen all across the United States. The impact of the growing number of ESL students present in schools has been the focus of much attention and at the center of this discussion has been attempting to decide how to best reach these students and give them the best education possible. This thesis will address what methods and approaches

have been developed over the years and will take into consideration the impact they will have on Hispanic students in different situations depending on the students' age and the environment (Johnson, 1992).

Teachers are not only expected to keep ESL students caught up with what the rest of the class is learning, but also teach them English and how to function in an English speaking country. It is because of this growth of international students in classrooms that the training of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and the discussion of which methods are the most effective to be used in the classroom has become key points of interest in the education world (Triple-Digit Growth, 2010). There has been recent discussion on eliminating teaching styles in classrooms that are inappropriate and not helpful to Hispanic students. The practices focus on direct instruction and only develop low level thinking skills and involve passive instruction (Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). More methods have been developed to replace these and to help Hispanic students learn important content, develop English skills, and build higher-level thinking skills.

Equipping the Teacher

It is difficult for a teacher to have students of different cultural backgrounds in the classroom who are not confident in their English or have no English background. Furthermore, a teacher cannot expect these students to succeed in an English-only classroom setting. It is important that there be specialized teachers to address the needs of these students in order to reach all students where they are and help them accomplish all that they need to in order to succeed. These teachers must be well informed on the newest methods that are being developed that can be used to better their teaching for

English language learners. They must be well-equipped to succeed and know that they have the tools to conquer any challenge they may face while trying to help students learn despite the language barrier that they are facing. Many methods have been developed from different schools of thought.

Teaching Environment and Student Background

There are many different situations and environments in which teachers will find themselves teaching English to students who are only fluent in Spanish. The most commonly thought of situation is the student from a Latin American country who is in the United States in an English classroom without having any prior knowledge in English. However, those children's parents may be new to the country as well and need to be taught English as much as their children do. They need to be taught how to go about the essential activities and duties of life in a foreign country that speaks a different language. Teachers must use different, more specific methods than used with children, to target these adult students' specific needs that are unique to their situation. This will be much different than how a third grader will be taught English in an elementary classroom setting. For example, students in a classroom like to learn through games and their brains absorb language learning much easier than an adult's does because learning a second language as an adult is usual much more difficult (Talukder, 2001). The final setting of English instruction to Hispanic students to be discussed is that of the student in his or her home country being taught English. This environment is extremely different from the other two in that the student is not immersed in the English culture, where they are only learning in a classroom setting and do not have the extra motivation of wanting to fit in

with the new culture and lead a successful life in their new country. All three of these situations are quite different from each other and the methods used to teach will be just as different also (Teaching English, 2008-2012).

Methods

My thesis will explore and explain many of the different methods, strategies, and approaches along with the ideas behind them. Many different methods are used to help English Language Learners in English speaking classrooms. Usually it is fairly difficult for anyone to learn a second language with its 44 phonemes with over 500 different ways to represent those 44 sounds (Tompkins, 2003). However, children generally learn relatively easily in the classroom as long as their specific needs are met (Roberts & Meyer, 2012). We will look at strategies such as the transitional bilingual strategy, the two way immersion program, the communicative approach, the silent way method, the grammar-translation approach, the direct approach, audio-lingual approach, and the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) method. After careful study of each of the ways that are used to teach English, and explanation of which methods should be used in specific situations depending on the strengths of the approach in as it corresponds to the setting and the students' needs. Much of this will depend on the learning level of the student and their learning style. Many different approaches can be taken when teaching English as a second language. Every method and approach is based on a certain school of thought or collection of ideas about learning. Each method provides strategies to teach while being guided by its specific system.

Methods Using the Mother Tongue

Some methods for teaching English as a second language place much more emphasis on students' learning and keeping up with the content knowledge that they should be learning at that level. In these methods, the teacher is fluent in the student's mother tongue and uses it in addition to instruction in English in order to provide content based instruction (Fisher & Rothenberg, 2007). Both English and the mother tongue are used quite frequently. The key to making these methods successful is in that the teacher uses the native language to develop cognitive abilities that can later be related to English (Leon, 2009). The main objective is to teach the student English while ensuring that they are not falling behind academically.

Transitional bilingual programs. In the transitional bilingual programs the teacher gives instruction in the academic subjects in the mother tongue while the students are learning English as well. The main purpose is to gradually place these students in mainstream classrooms without the students being behind in the academic subjects (Collier & Thomas, 2004). Research has shown that in Spanish speaking students, the achievement level is much higher in students who are in transitional bilingual programs that in students who are placed in English immersion programs. Studies have also shown that students who have been in later exit programs compared to those who have been mainstreamed at an earlier age in early exit programs also showed to have a better understanding of the English language as well as better test scores (Leon, 2009).

Two-way immersion program. Two- way immersion programs are used in classrooms where about half the students are native English speakers and the other half are English language learners. In the beginning of the class, 90% of the instruction is

given in the mother tongue of the English learners and 10% in English. Eventually the teacher works towards instruction being 50% in English and 50% in the mother tongue (Fisher & Rothenberg, 2007). This method requires a lot or work and commitment from the students, parents, and teacher, but is unique in that is seeks to produce bilingual students from both the native English speakers and those who are the English learners. This program would be helpful in states like Texas and Arizona where there is a strong Hispanic community in that it helps the English students work towards being bilingual as well. This would help them in communicating with Hispanics who have not yet mastered English. Many schools have implemented programs like this and the numbers are still growing. Schools with two-way programs have shown to be successful with both their ESL students and their students who are learning the other language, which in this case is Spanish (Christian, 1994).

Instructional Methods Using ESL

The communicative approach. According to the Teaching English British Council Database "[t]he communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and communication ill allow them to learn to use the language naturally" (Communicative Approach, 2012, para.1). Since this method focuses more on developing language that is used in everyday life and focuses more on the practical end of language learning, in my opinion it would be helpful to those Hispanic students who are just new to the country and need to learn how to get around and be able to communicate before focusing on formal language learning.

The Communicative Language approach was a reaction against more grammar based approaches to teaching English Language learners. Some argue that it is based on theory against other approaches, but not on actual empirical evidence in a classroom and proponents of the approach used the theory itself to validate the approach (Richards, 2002).

The silent way method. The Silent Way Method is also a more theory based method and was developed by Gattengo (1963) and focuses more on how adults learn language than some other methods. This method uses rods and charts to teach words instead of using implicit instruction (Richards, 2002). Gattengo (1963) seeks to replace the more natural approaches such as the Direct Method that focus more on how a baby learns its first language with looking more at how to apply meaning in a controlled environment. Gattengo (1963) argues that the teacher should step aside and let the learner discover meaning for himself and the method's focus is more on understanding than on grammar or spelling correctness (Gattegno, 1963).

Grammar-translation approach. One method is the grammar-translation approach in which most the instruction is given in the students' mother tongue. Much emphasis is placed on vocabulary and grammar in this method. This is much like a classic American high school Spanish language class where the instruction is given primarily in English, but the students are studying the Spanish language. However, in grammar-based ESL methods, there is much emphasis on structure function and vocabulary, but the instruction is given primarily in English (Fisher & Rothenberg, 2007).

Content based ESL. In this type of program, students are once again taught content and academic subjects in their native language. Emphasis is also placed on

preparing the students to study the material in English; however, there is more emphasis placed on English instruction than there is in other types of methods that are similar (Fisher & Rothenberg, 2007).

Direct Approach

The Direct Approach to teaching English to non-English speakers is a much more traditional approach to teaching language. Here the target language is taught according to grammatical structures and correct spelling and punctuation while drilling and practicing the taught linguistic information (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1997). According to Richards (1990) a direct approach "involves planning a conversational programme around the specific microskills, strategies, and processes that are involved in fluent conversation" (p. 76-77).

The Direct Approach never uses the mother tongue, and all instruction is done in the target language and places a lot of emphasis on learning about the new culture which the student is immersed in. It was created as a reacting again the classical grammar translation method and was developed by Francois Gouin and Charles Berlitz in the 1800s. Now it is used under the name of audio-lingual approach (ESL Glossary). Grammar rules are generalized and most learning takes place through actions or using pictures. Students ask questions and are answered in the target language. This method emphasizes immersion into the culture to learn the language as well as the new culture that the students are in. Some professionals do not find this method as helpful for Hispanic students in American classrooms since it is completely directed by the teacher and does not give much room for higher level thinking development on the part of the students (Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002).

Audio-Lingual Approach

This approach was developed shortly after World War II and became in a sense a combination method. Developed off of many theories behind the Direct Method and became its replacement after World War II, Audio-Lingual Approach combined what was thought of as an extremely important component of the direct theory, oral proficiency, along with structural linguistics and behaviorism (Britto, 2007). This development gave the basis for a new approach that was developed and became known as the Audio-lingual Method:

> The articulation of these three trends engendered the audio-lingual method (ALM), which provided a powerful framework that not only yielded a set of principles with which to guide generations of educators, but, by doing so, its own scientific validity was established. This provided the basis for a wide range of mainly quantitative research projects that gave characterized, directed, and even constrained the field since its ascendency. (Britto, 2007, p. 4)

In this approach a lot of dialogue takes place in the classroom and students are to learn from conversation that takes place. This strategy is based on phrase memorization and mimicking done by the students. There is no explicit grammatical instruction and the students learn the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a structured sequenced order. Usually the beginning of class in characterized by peer reading time and great emphasis is placed on correct pronunciation. The mother tongue is permitted to be used but mainly only by the teacher for instructional purposes. A weak point is that this method fails to emphasize importance of context and meaning (Mora, 2012).

Instructional Tools

Teachers' jobs are extremely difficult especially when they are given a Hispanic student who has limited proficiency in English. These teachers must have the resources and tools that they need in order to prevent students from falling behind while preparing them for life in an English speaking country.

Using the web. A characteristic of a good, well-rounded teacher is a teacher who is willing to use appropriate technology to help reach the students to the best of the teacher's ability. Advancements in technology have provided very helpful tools and resources that teachers can use while trying to reach students of all kinds of learning modalities. Since most children enjoy using a computer and technology, using these is wise on the part of the teacher to use this when deemed appropriate and helpful to the student. Computers and technology are extremely valuable tools that can help the teacher tremendously.

Tools provided through the use of the Internet can equip teachers who are helping students learn English as a second language. In her article "Promoting Learner Autonomy in the ESL Classroom Using Web 2.0" Cindy Gunn points out that the use of the Web has opened up a whole new world of learning to autonomous leaners (Gunn, 2011). Teachers need to try to encourage students to take charge of their own learning once the students have reached a stage at which they can take the initiative, and the use of web projects can help accomplish that. Students can get involved by practicing their growing language skill through blogs and wikis.

These tools provide opportunities for students to learn by collaborating in a group and involving writing and listening while learning: "Examples of Web2.0 tools are blogs,

photo and video sharing, social networking, wikis, and so on. These tools offer either or both synchronous, real-time communication and asynchronous, delayed communication, modes of interaction" (Gunn, 2011, p. 2). This seems to be an excellent strategy to use, especially when the students enjoy being able to use technology. Not only does this encourage them to work collaboratively in a group in the classroom, but to continue learning at home on their own time. Many times ELL students come from homes where English is not spoken, so as to give them a tool that they can use at home to continue to improve on and practice their English skills. They need to be continually learning and practicing in order for the students to become successful English speakers in and English speaking country. Eighty-eight percent of teachers in a study conducted in 2008 who worked with Hispanic students said that computers, internet, and technology were beneficial to them in their teaching and in the growth of their students (Kelsey, Mata-Clafli, Holland, & Castillo, 2008).

Writing to teach grammar. Teachers use many activities in the classroom to promote conversation and practice of words with the hopes that the students will be able to discover meaning and usages of different words through these activities. Many times, activities such as jigsaws and information gap tasks are used along with discussion time to accomplish these purposes. However, what these activities do not accomplish is instruction and practice of correct usage of grammar.

Research has suggested that in order to bring in grammatical practice and instruction about such subjects and verb tenses beyond the sentence level, the teacher should have his students do extensive writing (Storch, 2001). This study recommends the use of several different kinds of writing activities in order to help the student learn

grammar in different contexts. Students can collaborate and work on writing projects together, edit each other's works, and work together to establish and check good grammar (Storch, 2001). While learning basic communication skills is extremely important, it is also important to establish good grammar in order that the students end with a complete, working knowledge and ability to use English fluently.

Instructional Setting

While investigating the many different methods that have been developed to help students learn English as a second language, one can conclude that some methods are best used when the student is placed in an inclusive classroom setting and some just within a classroom of only ESL students. Some methods are best used in a class full of English learners, but some can be used in an inclusive classroom. The type of instruction must be determined by the age group/ level of the students as well as the type of classroom and environment the students will be learning in (Teaching English, 2008-2012).

Language Level of the Student

Teachers must determine at what level each student is located. A teacher who is teaching in an inclusive classroom with English learner students attending as well definitely needs to take note of this consideration in order to know who can move at what paced based on their understanding of the language itself. According to the United States Department of Education in 2007, 80% of the English language learners who were present in the United States school system spoke Spanish at home (Aud, Fox, & KewalRaman, 2010).

Furthermore, Fry and Gonzalez (2008) point out that the Hispanic population is predicted to grow about 166% from 2005 to 2050, which means 1 out of every 5 students in the United States public schools will be a Hispanic ESL student (Fry & Gonzales, 2008). Reaching such a large and growing population is important since they will be making up a large portion or the country.

The teacher must determine the learning level of the students. A classification system is used to classify the oral proficiency skills of the student. These classifications are initially fluent English proficient, limited English proficient, and reclassified English proficient (Hagan, 2010).

Early Elementary

Studies such as those that have been done by Mathes, et al (2007), have been conducted on young elementary native Spanish students who enter school as English learners and have struggled learning to read in even their native language. It is difficult teaching a student to read in English when the student has not even been able to master reading in Spanish. Many ELL students will have difficulty learning to read no matter what language they are learning in.

The journal article "Teaching Struggling Readers Who Are Native Spanish speakers: What Do We Do?" by Mathes et al (2007) documents the teaching of first graders whose native language is Spanish but have difficulties learning to read in Spanish before even learning English or being placed in an ESL program. The program had teaching of reading skill in both English and Spanish- the students would receive a proactive reading lesson plan and then a lectura proactiva lesson. The intervention followed three important interlaced components as follows: instructional design

principles, instructional strand development over time, and instructional delivery techniques. Instructional strands include phonemic awareness, orthophonemic knowledge, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension (Mathes, Pollard-Durodola, Cárdenas-Hagan, Linan-Thompson, & Vaugh, 2007). Each lesson also focused on incorporating instruction on the following three types of words: "directions from the teacher, words describing an instruction concept related to a tasks and vocabulary terms found in connected text used for fluency building an comprehension" (p. 267) Instruction also included scaffolding and other effective ELL teaching strategies. Routine, repetition, dialogue, and conversation were also basic ELL practices that were implemented. ESL techniques that were successful when teaching vocabulary and comprehension to such a young age group were as follows:

> To explore the meaning of words, intervention teachers provided a target word and asked if students knew the meaning. If students were unable to talk about the word in a meaningful way, then the teacher used the word in a sentence and provided examples of its use using examples from Latino culture when possible. Students were then asked to tell what they knew about the word. The teacher extended meaning based on students' responses. The teacher told the students how the word would be used in the context of the lesson. Students were then asked to give the definition or use the word in a sentence. In addition to providing a definition orally, pictures, gestures, and role play were used to enhance the students' understanding of various words. (Mathes et al, 2007, p. 267)

While the instruction of these first graders was observed, when they moved on from first grade, they were placed in total English immersion classrooms and nearly all Spanish

supports were removed. This means that the students were not able to continue practicing and developing their skills in their native tongue. It was concluded by the study that instruction in the native tongue must continue at least part of the day in order to maintain their skills in their first language as well (Mathes et al., 2007).

Fully Inclusive Classroom

In the book *Practical Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners,* Curtin (2009) argues that ESL students need to be included in a normal classroom in order to learn English and not get behind on content learning as well (Curtin, 2009). English learners must be around fluent native speaker and not try to learn English in isolation as Gouin discovered in Germany in 1880 (Curtin, 2009). Gouin attempted to learn German while in Germany, but he isolated himself in his hotel and studied vocabulary and every verb tense. However, when he went out and walked around the city, he realized that he could not understand or communicate anything. In the same way, ESL students cannot be expected to learn in isolation but should be with English speaking students, learning the same things, of course with language. Also these students are usually no longer under just an ESL teacher, but now are the responsibilities of teachers of normal K-12 classrooms (Curtin, 2009**).**

Example using the SIOP model. The SIOP method was developed over seven years of careful research and study in coordination with middle school teachers of English language learners. SIOP stands for Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol. In this model, teachers use core curriculum standards of learning but develop their lessons in a way that help ELL students understand and learn material while learning and developing English vocabulary. The developers of this model point out that this is not

something completely new and it build upon other ELL methods that have been previously developed. But it includes certain aspects that will help students succeed in each subject area while they are learning a new language. The developers summarize the model as the following: "SIOP is a lesson-planning and delivery approach composed of 30 instructional strategies grouped into eight components: Preparation, Building Background Comprehensible Input, Strategies, Interaction, Practice /Application. Lesson Delivery, and Review/Assessment" (Short & Echevarria, 2005, p. 11).

Teachers implementing SIOP did many things to specifically target ELL students in their lesson plans to ensure that the students were both growing in the content area that was being taught and also in the target language. Teachers would include a language element in every objective to be sure that both goals were being meant. They also made sure to continue building the child's background knowledge. Since children from other countries do not have the same background knowledge about certain subjects as American students, teachers cannot expect ELL students to be able to write about or discuss the American War of Independence, for example, if they have not learned about that before. That is why SIOP finds it important to continually build the students background knowledge. The model also places emphasis on practice in academic literacy in all content areas (Short & Echevarria, 2005).

The SIOP model was found to be successful in educating ELL students in both English and in the content areas in which they were receiving instruction. According to Short and Echevarria (2005), the research revealed that, "ELLs who teachers where trained in implementing the SIOP model performed significantly better on academic writing assessment that did a comparison group of ELLs whose teachers had no exposure

to the model" (p. 10). In conclusion, this model appears to have been effective, especially with students from Hispanic backgrounds, and would be a model to be considered in the classroom that includes all ELL students.

Cooperative learning. In cooperative learning, the class is divided into small groups of about 4 students. All different levels of learning are represented in the heterogeneous groups, that way the students are not at the same point in their studies and can help each other learn (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011). Homogenous grouping is done also in cooperative learning; however, study has shown that lower level students that are just grouped with other students at the same lower level perform worse and do not show the growth that students in heterogeneous groups do (Kulik, 1993).

Cooperative learning has been found effective for elementary and secondary students across a broad range of subjects, and it is especially so for English learners who are learning to operate in English. The cooperative activities give them regular opportunities to discuss the content and to use the language of the school in a safe context. Many English learners are shy or reluctant to speak up in class for fear of being laughed at, but in a small cooperative group they can speak and learn from their friends and classmates. Research has clearly shown the effectiveness (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011).

Best Education Environment

Much can be evaluated in the learning process of students as they learn a new language and culture. The methods chosen to teach students and should also help them grow in their understanding of their surroundings and feel comfortable in the new culture (Teaching English, 2008-2012).

Awareness of differences in the Hispanic and American classroom. Teachers need to be sensitive to the cultural background of ELL students in the classroom. Certain things that may seem perfectly normal in an American classroom could be taken as offensive to children from other countries or be so much of a change that the student cannot get past the differences and on to learning. According to Cazden (1988), in Hispanic communities, it is thought to be rude to begin business right away. American schools tend to dive into the material much more abruptly while children from other backgrounds are used to a more relaxed beginning period characterized by talk with the teacher about their families and lives. North American teachers tend to just address a topic, ask questions, and then discuss the answers given by the students. Many Hispanic children would not react well to this kind or routine (Fitzgerald, 1993).

Adult Language Learners

Another important aspect of teaching English as a second language features teaching adults. Many times certain situations bring adults to the United States who have no background in English or American culture. Teaching adults English is very important in our culture today also and is very different from the normal school environment. Since adults learn differently than children do (Knowles, 1980), different methods are to be used for teaching adults. Generally it is much more difficult for adults to learn something new like a new language (Talukder, 2001). The teacher will also want to implement more vocabulary learning that will pertain to what specifically the adult needs to learn first. For example if the adult is in the United Stated to work construction, he will need to learn construction vocabulary first.

TESOL for Hispanic Adults

One difficultly that faces Hispanic adults in the United States is the growing Hispanic sub-culture that is present. With so many Latin Americans living inside the United States now, many of them do not see the necessity of learning English and being able to speak English fluently (Hayes, 1989). Nearly everywhere in the United States, many signs or important instructions are translated into Spanish. Also many companies have employees who are bilingual in order to help those customers or clients who can only speak Spanish. According to Hayes (1989), “[t]he accessibility of Spanish language media, entertainment, and other commercial enterprises also reduces the immediate need to learn English” (p. 49). Not that any of these things are wrong or should not be provided in the United States; however, they definitely do not provide motivation or desperate need for Hispanic adults to learn English.

Many adults who live in the United States, but were born in Hispanic countries have difficulty speaking in English or cannot speak English comfortably or fluently. According to Hakimzadeh and Cohn (2007), "Most Hispanics who are naturalized citizens (52%) speak English very well or pretty well. Most non-citizens (74%) speak just a little English or none at all” (p. iii). As discussed earlier, much has been done to help those who speak primarily Spanish in making sure that many things are translated into Spanish. However, that is only temporarily fixing a much bigger problem. The language barrier itself needs to be addressed in order to give Hispanic Americans the resources they need in order to help them lead independent and successful lives in a predominantly English speaking country.

Methods and approaches for adults. However, learning English as an adult can be especially difficult since adults generally struggle more while learning foreign languages than children do. Those who instruct adults in English must be well equipped and know what methods and strategies would be best to use in these unique and often difficult situations. In Gault's research in adult ESL, he found that the most times when teachers did not meet their students' expectations was when the teachers were using only a communicative based method and were not correcting the errors that were being made by the students (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008). But he goes on to say the following about how to integrate the positive parts of a communicative approach to better reach the student and their expectations of the ESL program: "Although Gault does not recommend giving up, therefore, on communicative approaches, he does suggest making clear the rationale for using them (preferably in the students' native languages) and balancing them with approaches and exercises that match the students' expectations" (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008, p. 10).

English Difficulties

English is a very difficult language to learn as a second language (Alexander, 2009). Native speakers would not really think anything of it, since that is what they are used to; however, English has many components that make it a challenging language. English has many rules, as does every language, but English also has countless exceptions to its rules. This is very confusing to new learners. The components of the English language that make it very difficult to learn, but there are methods that can be used to teach the language that help compensate for those difficulties.

Spanish as a Latin Based Language

Students whose native language has a Latin base are able to recognize some English words just based on the similarities found in some words between English and their native language (Short & Echevarria, 2005). Spanish is a Latin based language just like English is. Because both languages are Latin based, Hispanic English language learners will be able to see similarities in words between the two languages. However, the teacher must realize that, even though similarities are present, that does not mean that they are always obvious or easy for students to pick up. Teachers need to always be sensitive to the difficulties that their students will encounter and understand that this is very hard on the students (Short & Echevarria, 2005).

Difficulties

While Spanish and English are both alphabetic languages that are Latin-based, many profound differences can make English very difficult to master. For example, while Spanish only consists of 22 sounds, the English language consists of approximately 44 sounds that can be combined in over 500 different ways (Tompkins, 2010). Also English has a very different way of dividing words into syllables than Spanish does which can be very difficult for leaners. These differences between the two languages would seem very foreign for a Spanish speaker aspiring to learn English. For example, the /th/ sound which is used in many English words nearly impossible for Spanish speakers to say because Spanish does not have /th/. Spanish speakers many times substitute /d/ for /th/ because it sounds similar and it is extremely difficult for them to make the sound (Tompkins, 2003): "English language learners can benefit from learning which components of phonics knowledge transfer and what is similar or dissimilar about the two languages. Instructors

must not assume that the transfer is automatic. It must be explicitly taught" (Hagan, 2010, p. 26).

Teaching English Outside of the United States

Teaching English as a second language is not limited to only a setting in the United States. American teachers have many opportunities to go to foreign counties as English teachers. Nearly every country is eager to have native English teachers come to their country and the options are endless. One can see how just from that phonological example of the difference in the number of sounds, that English could be seen as more complex through the eyes of a Spanish speaker (Hagan, 2010). Also the teacher is being immersed into the culture of the mother language and is teaching language and not necessarily culture. This makes it much different that teaching English to non-English students in an American classroom and it will employ the use of different methods.

Teaching English in a Hispanic country is more difficult on the teacher, but the students are still learning the same language, just in a different setting. Students who are learning English for the first time while in the United States are surrounding by English speakers all day long giving them added motivation to understand the new culture that they are immersed in. That added motivation is not present when teaching in a non-English speaking culture.

Sequences for the teacher. Teaching English overseas is very difficult for the teacher because just simply knowing English and being able to speak it fluently does not mean that it will be easy to teach to students who it is completely new to it (Smith, 2012). Students in foreign countries attend English classes for many different reasons whether it

be preparing for a high school exam or just for basic English skills. The teacher must know the purpose for the students learning English, but if there is no one clear purpose or several present in the class, Smith (2012) suggests that teachers adhere to the following outline:

1) Focus on developing a balanced, general set of English skills.

2) Emphasize basic knowledge and skills.

3) Include a mix of skill goals and content goals.

4) Attend to affective factors. (Goals section, para. 1)

In other words, it is best not to become too specific too fast, but to work on basic understanding and communication skills. After working through the basics and giving the student a base of knowledge to work from, begin to set goals that are more specific and specialized to the needs of the student and what they need the instruction for.

A method may be hard to settle on, but Smith (2012) suggests that they best way to make sure the students are learning is practicing all the time. Teachers are to continually have their students practice and hold conversation using the skills that they are learning. Smith (2012) says, “While methods should be chosen on the basis of pedagogical soundness, they should also be acceptable to the students. Methods that are educationally sound may not work in a course because they are too unfamiliar or uncomfortable to the students” (Methods section, para. 2). Teachers must learn to merge with the culture that they are working within and use whatever method will be best with their specific students in that culture.

Final Conclusion on Methods for Teaching Hispanic ESL Students

With the growing number of ELL students in classrooms in the United States, it is important that teachers and the education community be conscious of these students and their needs. ELL students cannot be allowed to get behind in the material that should be covered in their grade, but they also have the huge problem on not being able to speak the language. That is why the study of the various methods and strategies that have been developed is extremely important. Strategies that include content standards in the objectives but also incorporate English language learning are probably some of the most beneficial for the student. Those in which the teacher is able to at least communicate in the students mother tongue would be helpful to the student in order to not get behind and also to grasp an understanding of more complex things in English is the teacher can explain so harder to understand concepts in the student's mother tongue. Each specific English teaching opportunity will be unique in the respect of the students' background, the teachers' background where the teaching is taking place, and the age of the students. All of this must be taken into consideration when trying to decide which methods of teaching will be the most beneficial to the students. As explained, the classroom must also be sensitive to the background of the students and their culture. Just how teachers of English in foreign countries must learn that culture, they must do the same for students in schools in the United States. Students in the United States and abroad must get the best education possible while they are learning English.

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